

Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Public Affairs Committee Meeting
February 21, 2012

Members: Don Walters, Chair
Carrie Snyder
Carol Klinger

Mr. Walters called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. All members were present.

The minutes from the February 6, 2012 Public Affairs Committee meeting were approved as submitted.

Legislation Discussed:

Temp. Ord. A-18

Temp. Ord. A-19

Discussion

Temp. Res. A-18

A resolution authorizing the Director of Public Service to apply for and accept a grant from the Summit/Akron Solid Waste Management Authority, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Novak stated this will allow the City to apply for a federal grant from the Solid Waste Authority. Entities are charged \$5 for every ton of trash generated in Summit County that has to go to a landfill. This grant gives a portion back to entities who are continuing to recycle or are new to recycling. Last year, the City received \$45,815. This year, it was said to be \$38,199. The money will be used towards the salaries of the recycle crew.

Ms. Snyder moved to bring out A-18 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mrs. Klinger. Motion passed (3-0).

Temp. Ord. A-19

An ordinance amending the Traffic Control File by providing for installation of various traffic control devices, and declaring an emergency.

Capt. Davis stated this ordinance addressed one item, which is to remove the four-way signal at Second and Chestnut, and replace it with two-way stop signs. Mr. Walters stated he is on the Traffic Committee. He asked Mr. Konich to read his February 17 email sent to Council members the previous week (copy attached). Mr. Walters stated he was the one Traffic Committee member who had voted no. He has been at both intersections (Second/Chestnut and Second/Sackett) a few times. At one point, there was discussion of leaving the signal up but set to flash. Mr. Konich indicated that was an option. Mr. Walters stated if that is the case, the current wording in the ordinance will not suffice. He asked if that option was still something that could be explored or was there still a legal issue. Mr. Konich stated if the light is left at flash, the controller would be moved to Sackett. A flashing signal functions as an alert and is placed at intersections that see a lot of accidents. A flashing signal does not appear to be warranted at Chestnut when you have a full-functioning traffic signal one block away at Sackett. There really is no line-of-sight problem nor is it a high accident area. He would not recommend a flashing signal. He felt the light should either be left up or totally removed. Mrs. Klinger asked whether the loop at the Second/Chestnut intersection was working correctly. Mr. Konich stated it has not worked since the road was repaved last year. Mrs. Klinger asked why the traffic study was done during the summer when traffic is light instead

of during the school year when traffic would be heavier. Mr. Konich stated he spoke with the consultant about that. They indicated that history has shown it did not matter whether they did a traffic study during time periods that were slow or time periods that were busy because they only found a +/- 5% to 10% difference between the two. They found this intersection to be 25%. Even if traffic on a school day were to increase it to 50%, that is still not enough volume of traffic to warrant a four-way traffic signal. Federal guidelines require that a certain amount of traffic be sustained for an average flow across several hours throughout the day. Mrs. Klinger asked if this intersection had been studied before. Mr. Konich was not aware of any previous studies and stated that nothing was noted in the traffic files. Mrs. Klinger asked about the retaining wall on the southwest corner of Chestnut affecting drivers' line-of-sight. Mr. Konich replied that according to the study, there is no true line-of-sight difficulty. Drivers can pull up a little farther if they need a better line-of-sight. They do not need to go into the intersection to get it. Mrs. Klinger stated in a college course she had taken, they were requested to do a net present value calculation on a traffic light. The answer was there is no such thing because you cannot put a value on a person's life.

Mrs. Pyke asked whether the traffic study recommended removing the light. Mr. Konich stated it did not. Mrs. Pyke read from the report: "From the west approach on Chestnut at Second, ISD from the proper location cannot be obtained to the north and the south due to landscaping on the northwest and southwest corners." Mrs. Pyke stated if the traffic signal were removed, drivers on the side street would not have proper ISD (intersection sight distance). She asked if Mr. Konich had the accident reports at Falls Avenue and Second Street. Mr. Konich stated in the past 2-1/2 years, there have been nine accidents, four of which were unrelated to the intersection. The remaining five were due to a failure to yield. Mrs. Pyke stated she cannot express how strongly she feels that this light must stay. The City's goal is to make this a sustainable walking area, which would include additional units for seniors and businesses. Chestnut Blvd. lost a light at 12th Street. She frequently gets calls from residents requesting that light be put back up. If the light at Second and Chestnut is taken away, it will never be put back up. Even with all of the planned development taking place, the light will not come back. This report does not say the light has to come down. She has email and letters if anyone on Council would like to see them. None of them are in favor of the light coming down. It is a 15 second light on Chestnut. Mr. Konich stated the report does not say the light should come down but it does say it is likely not warranted. Regarding accidents at the intersections, four accidents at Chestnut and Second were all assured clear distance. The traffic count the City did in July is what was recommended in the report. There is really no slow or fast time. In July, there are more people outside than there are in the winter because of the weather. The consultant did not see a big difference in results from studies it does for multiple days. If measures aren't warranted during peak times, they aren't warranted during slow times.

Rev. Kirk Bruce, Pilgrim United Church of Christ, agreed that the light needed to be removed. He drives through that intersection six to eight times a day. The City is putting lights in the wrong places for the wrong reasons. It would be wonderful if the lights were synced. The goal is to get traffic flowing smoothly and safety throughout the community. This cannot be done if drivers have to stop every 200 yards. They cannot even reach the speed limit when they have to continually stop. There is a light at Sackett that creates multiple gaps. On the way here, traffic on Chestnut had to stop. Then, the light turned green for Chestnut so Second Street had to stop. Everyone had to stop because of a light that is not needed. Without the light, everything would flow a lot smoother. People do the research on this and the City pays them. Maybe those people know something. All he knows is he waits 15 seconds and another 15 seconds and another 15 seconds. That all adds up.

Mrs. Pyke asked what the three major east-west streets were in Cuyahoga Falls. Mr. Demasi replied they were Broad Blvd., Portage Trail and Graham Road. Mrs. Pyke asked what the fourth was. Mr. Demasi replied it was Steels Corners. Mrs. Pyke stated that was too far north and asked if it could be Chestnut Blvd. She stated Chestnut is crowded with people getting on the expressway. She suggested that perhaps

that 15 seconds would be a good time to reflect. This is a residential area. She asked whether the City wants to move traffic through faster or safer.

Mr. Walters stated that the old school of thought was that you slowed cars by stop signs and traffic lights, but what they have found is that drivers will speed in an attempt to make up time. That is the reason the City pulled a lot of the four-ways. People will make up time somewhere else. He stated he was looking at a compromise of making the light flash yellow on Second and red on Chestnut. That way the controller can be moved to Sackett. He indicated he would make an amendment next week, which will either pass or fail on its merits. No one can predict an accident.

Don Nelsch of North Haven Blvd. agreed with Rev. Bruce and Mr. Konich regarding the removal of the light. He took strong exception with the statement made that once a light comes down, it will never go back up. In fact, he stated the Planning Commission will be installing a light in a location that never had one. That has happened more than once in the City. The City had a legal problem a few years back where it was forced to remove certain stop signs. He hopes the City does not have to go through that again and get rid of traffic lights. Mr. Rubino asked him how he felt about the compromise. Mr. Nelsch did not have a problem with a flashing light at that location. Mrs. Pyke stated that a while back she asked why the retaining wall on the southwest corner of Chestnut was being allowed, and she was told she did not need to worry about it because that traffic light was never coming down. It is difficult to see looking north. This light needs to stay. She asked if there was a new controller at Steels Corners and State Road, and whether there were sidewalks or designated crosswalks. Mr. Konich was not sure. Mrs. Pyke thought perhaps there is an option where there is a new controller that could be moved.

Mr. Rubino asked Rev. Bruce how he felt about the proposed compromise. Rev. Bruce stated he would be satisfied with having the light set to flash. Mr. Barnhart asked if a flashing light would accomplish anything. There is a flashing light at 23rd and Broad yet accidents still occur there. Mr. Walters felt if there is a flashing yellow light on Second Street, it would give drivers an awareness that there is an intersection. Flashing red would be more of a warning to be extra cautious when you stop. Mr. Konich stated, with regard to State Road and Steels Corners, that the light is there because of traffic. Mrs. Pyke asked about the controller that allows for the crosswalks. Mr. Konich stated that is all included. That intersection is a busy intersection. He added that it is not the City's intent to put anyone's life at risk but traffic signals are not taken down without reason. To have two signals on a low-volume traveled street does not make sense. The study recommended that the City do a traffic count and the count came up low. There does not need to be a light at Second and Chestnut. If people are walking in the area and need to cross Second Street, they can go down and cross at Sackett. The City is not taking this action lightly. The report states there could be a sight distance problem. At the time the report was prepared, there was shrubbery that has since been taken down. His recommendation is to take the light out and move the controller to Sackett.

Mrs. Snyder moved to bring out A-19 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mr. Walters. Motion passed (2-1).

Meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.